

**Oak Knoll
Pasadena, CA**

Project Identity and Location

Oak Knoll is a 1920s Italianate house on a one-acre corner lot in the city of Pasadena, CA.

Purpose of Project

The clients, a young family with three school-age children, purchased the property with a vision to transform the tired and poorly laid out gardens into an environment that maximized family life and their ability to share their home with a multitude of friends.

Role of Landscape Architect

While the home is somewhat formal and grand, the original gardens lacked any of the expected beauty and grace the new owners desired. While generous in size, the backyard originally was dominated by a driveway and carport accessed via the side street. The first move of the project was to shift vehicular circulation from one side of the house to the other, for more direct access to the garage. This opened up the backyard to craft large and usable spaces for family life. The back of the house features a new loggia with a rooftop terrace, which leads to an activity lawn that spans out into the garden and terminates in a small grove of existing oak trees. The pool and spa are both artful and functional, featuring hand painted tile and a linear rectilinear geometry that allows flexibility in use. The pool is flanked by a new outdoor living room featuring a pergola and fireplace expressive of the Italianate style, with colorful furnishings and materials that reflect the owner's exuberance. All the garden features were carefully laid out to maintain an openness that honors views to the San Gabriel Mountains beyond.

Significance

The garden is dutiful in its geometric reflection of the home's architecture while providing the flexibility necessary to celebrate the family's personality. What truly brings all of it together is the eclectic and unexpected planting found throughout. A typical Mediterranean palette is turned on its heels by way of layers of textures, colors, and forms. When architecture is introduced into the garden, it is softened by lush and colorful plants. Vines are allowed to grow to the precipice of being unkempt, in turn relaxing the formality of the space. Linear garden paths are lightened with purposefully weathered pieces of concrete, contributing a strong sense of texture and warmth.

Special Factors

Due to the recession, a serendipitous constraint arose in the budget that caused the planting to be executed in phases. This slow and piecemeal approach was a unique circumstance that allowed more time to carefully execute our vision, resulting in a rich layering that is difficult to achieve when planted all at once.